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ABSTRACT

A study on the missions of postsecondary education providers in England identified a range of practice in establishing an institutional mission and presented proposals for the effective development and review of institutional missions. Phase 1 of the project involved research and analysis. A brief literature review focused on mission statement development and use, in both provider organizations and the corporate sector, and identified the value of the process of mission development, especially when mission is developed with stakeholder involvement and used to drive strategy and operational activity. A sample of local Learning and Skills Councils were surveyed as to their use of provider missions. Analysis was undertaken, highlighting various approaches to missions and their development as well as issues for consideration. This survey of providers indicated the development, content, and use of mission are variable among providers. In Phase 2, a framework for mission development and review was proposed. Section 2 of this report sets forth a step-by-step guide to assist organizations in the mission development process, followed by explanatory notes on the five phases: envisage the future, form a mission team, develop a draft mission, communicate final mission, and operationalize the mission. (25 references) (YLB)

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A report by the LSDA for the DfES

Afiong Edem
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Barry Fyfield

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A report by the LSDA for the DfES

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Executive summary

1 This report on provider missions is the result of a project, commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to inform the guidelines established for the Strategic Area Review (SAR) framework. It identifies a range of practice in establishing an institutional mission and presents proposals for the effective development and review of institutional missions.

2 The report draws on theory drawn from a literature review of mission statement development and use, both in provider organisations and the corporate sector.

3 A sample of local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) were surveyed as to their use of provider missions. Analysis was undertaken, highlighting various approaches to missions and their development as well as issues for consideration.

4 The literature review identifies the value of the process of mission development, especially when mission is developed with stakeholder involvement and used to drive strategy and operational activity.

5 The survey of providers indicated that the development, content and use of mission are variable among providers.

6 The discussion document *Success for all* (DfES 2002) is seen as one useful catalyst for SARs and provider mission reviews.

7 A framework is suggested for the development and review of mission:
- within the context of *Success for all* (DfES 2002) and SAR
- for possible use by individual providers.

8 The timescale for the provider reviews process is provided.

1 Introduction

1.1 The central claims for institutional mission are that it describes the distinctiveness of an organisation; establishes a clear sense of purpose; assists in marketing; and acts as a driver for strategic direction and operational effectiveness, through facilitating decision-making and evaluation.

1.2 In the current learning and skills sector, clarifying the distinctiveness of providers is seen as a desirable process. Paragraph 14 of *Success for all* (DfES 2002) states that:

> *We want every college and provider to be clear about its own education mission and focus on its particular strengths. This is not about imposing arbitrary or unnecessary restrictions on what is offered where that is of good quality and meets local needs… In the future, we want colleges and other providers to focus upon what they do best… This will mean taking hard decisions about whether it is right to continue with everything that they do now … and filling gaps where they occur.*

1.3 The first phase of the project (research and analysis) involved:

- a brief literature review of the role and value of mission
- an analysis of mission statement content across providers in the sector, with particular reference to patterns and distinctiveness
- a small-scale survey of a *range of sector provider organisations* to identify development process and usage
- a sample survey of local LSCs to ascertain the extent to which missions are used to inform the planning of provision locally.

1.4 The outcomes of Phase 1 informed Phase 2, where a framework for mission development and review is proposed.

2 Phase 1 – Research and analysis

Overview: vision, mission and strategy

2.1 There is considerable discussion on the merits, or otherwise, of mission statements and the distinction between mission and vision. This distinction is perhaps best clarified by Denton (2001). He cites definitions of vision as:

> *...defining your destination ... [the] organisation's aspirations for the future that appeal to the emotions and beliefs of organisational members. Mission, on the other hand, is similar to our identity and includes such concepts as an organisation's purpose, competitive distinctiveness, market definition, principal economic concerns and core values.*

2.2 This is well illustrated by Steve Ballmer (2002) in a memo in which he claimed of Microsoft: 'Over the next century, we may have several different vision statements to best state what the company is trying to accomplish, but our mission of enabling people and business to realize their full potential need not change.'

2.3 For Scandura *et al.* (1996), a vision statement is developed by the top management of an organisation to define the organisation's future state: it is a dream. The mission statement reveals the current reason for the existence of an organisation on the basis of that stated vision.

2.4 While Stacey (1996) describes a mission as a way of behaving. It is concerned with the way an organisation is managed today, with its purpose or reason for being: '...mission is to do with the here-and-now purpose, the culture, the business philosophy, the paradigm itself.'

2.5 Conway, Mackay and Yorke (1994) see a company mission as a 'broadly defined but enduring statement of purpose that distinguishes a business from others of its type and identifies the scope of its operations in product and market terms.' It reveals the image the company seeks to project, reflects the company's self-concept, and indicates the principal product or service areas and the primary customer needs the company will attempt to satisfy.

2.6 These authors make the link between mission and strategy: at the corporate level, organisations need to consider the reasons for their existence and how they intend to achieve their objectives over a period of time. At the business level, strategy involves consideration of the external environment and how the organisation can achieve a competitive advantage: 'It has become generally accepted over the years by both academics and practitioners that a vital starting point for these strategic considerations is the formulation of a mission statement'.

2.7 Drucker (1992), for example, sees mission statements as a key component of an effective strategic planning process:

> *...It [the mission] focuses the organisation on action. It defines the specific strategies needed to attain the crucial goals. It creates a disciplined organisation. It alone can prevent the most common degenerative disease of organisations, especially large ones; splintering their always limited resources on things that are 'interesting' or look 'profitable' rather than concentrating them on a very small number of productive efforts.*

2.8 Support for these views is found in numerous case studies attesting the value of mission statements for individual firms (eg Campbell and Nash 1992; Pearce 1994). Moreover, in a survey of over 1000 executives at large companies, conducted by the Strategic Planning Forum (1996) to assess their use of 25 popular management tools, mission statements were shown to meet the market test. Throughout the 1990s, nearly 90% of executives reported using them.

2.9 Where debates exist, this has largely been in relation to the mission development process: specifically the extent to which key stakeholders are involved; and mission's usefulness to practical day-to-day operation, which has led many to question its unequivocal value. Goold and Campbell (1989) observed that 'the demand for missions and policy statements does not prove their worth', because they are so bland as to be applicable to almost any organisation and because 'they are not evidenced in the actions of management'. It is therefore crucial to emphasise the need for mission articulation to be supported by a set of actions and behaviours.

2.10 Mullane (2002) shows that in studies of mission, the importance of the process is acknowledged by managers. In one study he cites, 73% of managers were less than fully satisfied with the process used to create mission, 'primarily because major stakeholder groups, most notably employees and managers, had been left out of the process'. In another contrasting study, he notes that managers found mission to be the most used tool out of 25 identified. The claim here was that 'satisfaction rested on the mission statement's efficacy at creating organisational integration – getting everyone focussed on common objectives'.

2.11 He goes on to say that 'creating and using a mission statement can foster a shared value system, a focus on common objectives, teamwork, behavioural guidelines, and emotional commitment to the company.'

Mission in the educational sector

2.12 Most of the literature on organisational mission originates in the corporate context, but the definitions of mission in the educational world appear to be very similar. Caruthers and Lott (1981), writing about US higher education, state that a mission statement 'should tell what an

institution is and what it is not'; while Davies (1985), writing about British universities, notes that 'mission is the most fundamental and stable account of the type of institution it is, or should be'.

2.13 This suggests that the concept of mission differs very little from that used in business. Indeed Peeke (1994), writing on institutional mission and its application to the management of further and higher education, argues that the concept of mission as promoted in British further and higher education is 'similarly business-orientated ... it reflects a major concern for the customer and the market'.

2.14 Weiss and Piderit (1999) note that mission statements 'articulate what is distinctive about the organisation in ways that clarify the [public] agency's contributions to a larger policy domain and mobilise external stakeholder support by showing how agency efforts help to achieve shared goals'. Further, that explicit communication can help to attract resources and overcome opposition from other organisations. According to Moore (1995), 'If the manager's articulated mission expresses a value or a purpose that a community advocates, then the community will be inclined to give the manager its support.'

2.15 Peeke (1994) undertook a significant analysis of missions and mission statements across the FE and HE sectors. He identified five functions for mission statements:

1. to encourage the development of a sense of purpose
2. to facilitate decision-making in the organisation
3. to enable more effective communication
4. to aid evaluation activity
5. to clarify a marketing strategy.

2.16 A study by Davies and Glaister (1997) examining the development, content and use of mission statements in UK business schools, found that those that had a written mission statement found them useful in identifying the significant tasks of the business school, improving leadership and in enhancing its public image.

2.17 In the study, a number of respondents commented on the perceived benefits of mission statements by articulating their value in the creation and development of cohesiveness within the business schools: 'Business schools are often composed of several quite different activities. To develop a short, but valuable mission statement is very difficult, but the process helps staff develop a cohesive view of what the business school is aspiring to achieve.'

2.18 For others, the process of developing mission statements was seen as valuable in enabling areas of disagreement to be identified and in providing a 'significant basis for working towards a consensus'. They also helped to create a 'shared ownership of academic plans'.

2.19 It is worth noting that this combination of internal marketing and conflict brokering roles emerged from the process (rather than the statement alone) and reflects the importance and value of investing time in engaging staff and stakeholders in the process. Again, the mission development process emerges as a key determinant of the value, or otherwise, of mission.

2.20 Governors play a critical role in establishing the educational character and determining the strategic direction of their college. Yet initial indications from the governance health check undertaken by the LSDA in conjunction with Ben Johnson-Hill Associates (LSDA 2001) showed that, while governors were satisfied that the mission statements reflected the core business of the college, there was some uncertainty about the mechanics of their relevance and execution. There was, for instance, little appreciation of the internal value that mission statements might provide for coherent coordination and decision-making. For many governing boards, the exercise was academic: it was something that had to be done.

2.21 In addition, many boards expressed an ignorance of the core business (the curriculum). In such circumstances, there was little scope for them to engage in meaningful dialogue with senior managers in the construction of a mission. These difficulties were further underlined by the uneven nature of board involvement at a strategic level, with many governing boards struggling to engage in the development of an overview of college performance.

Content of mission statements

2.22 Several works have delineated what should be included in a mission statement. Overall, there appears to be no simple formula that prescribes exactly what elements a mission statement should contain. In one collection of 622 mission statements (Graham and Havlick 1994), no two had the exact same format, formula, or indeed pattern. They varied in length as well as tone. But there does appear to be a consensus that mission statements should:

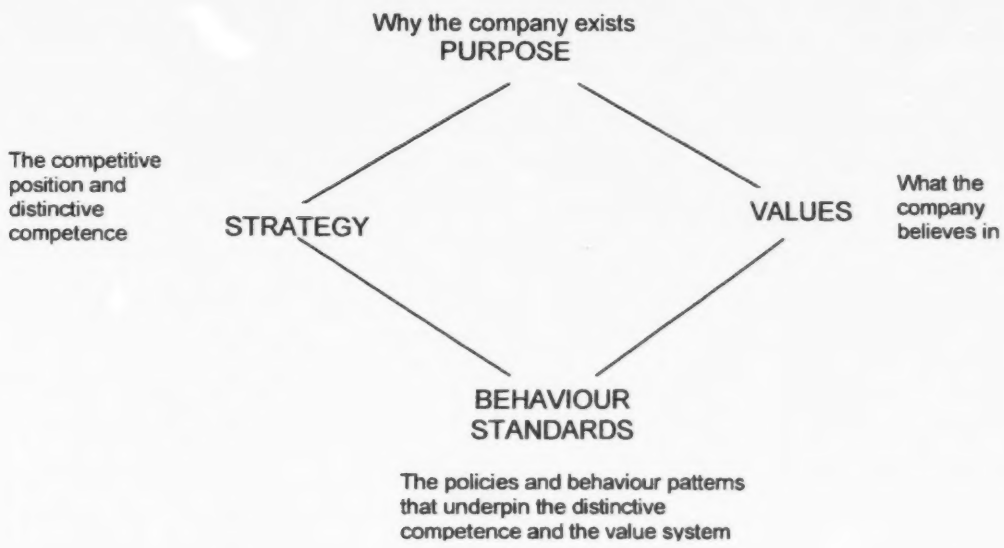
- convey organisational purpose
- crystallise management's view of long-term direction
- help keep direction-related actions of managers *focused* on a common goal.

2.23 They *should* be both looking outward at customer needs and looking inward to indicate the scope of an organisation's operations.

2.24 The mission model devised by the Ashridge School of Management (Campbell, Devine and Young 1990) focuses on the need for an organisation to develop (or articulate) a 'sense of mission', which is then put into a form of words which becomes the mission statement. This

model sees a mission as consisting of four components, as shown in **Figure 1** (source: Campbell and Tawady 1990).

Figure 1 The four components of mission


Why the company exists
PURPOSE
The competitive position and distinctive competence
STRATEGY
VALUES
What the company believes in
BEHAVIOUR STANDARDS
The policies and behaviour patterns that underpin the distinctive competence and the value system

2.25 In this model, a strong sense of mission is achieved when personal and organisational values match, and when the four elements are closely knitted together, supporting and reinforcing each other.

2.26 Bart and Baetz (1998) introduced the concept of mission–organisational alignment as a potentially important antecedent to a mission's influence over employee behaviour. They observed that the more closely an organisation was able to align its structure, systems and procedures with its mission, the greater the impact on performance generally, and on employee behaviour, in particular. Similar results were obtained by Bart (1999) in his study of 103 hospitals.

2.27 In surveying the literature, Peeke (1994) identified common characteristics of mission statements. They should:

1. specify clearly the nature of the enterprise in terms of its products and services
2. reflect the concerns of organisational members
3. specify the enterprise's markets and customers
4. specify the beliefs and values prized by organisational members that it wishes to communicate.
5. specify the technology in use
6. specify the growth policy of the organisation
7. be general enough to be flexible, but specific enough to enable priorities to be established.

2.28 These characteristics were used to analyse the mission statements of a range of providers. The analysis is presented in **Table A** in **section 3.**

Developing a mission statement

2.29 The discussion so far indicates that the effective development of a mission through the involvement of key stakeholders is necessary for a 'living mission' – that is, one where commitment to the mission permeates all that the organisation does.

2.30 The literature reveals a number of methods for developing mission. They include:

1. establishment by a committee or group
2. establishment by survey
3. inferring or eliciting mission from decision analysis and interviewing
4. determination by senior management.

2.31 The last method is generally perceived as a 'top down' imposition and likely to have less validity than other methods unless carefully communicated and used. The other three methods may involve a range of stakeholders, but the key consideration is who is involved and whether their views are perceived to be incorporated in the final mission.

2.32 Peeke (1994) uses three case studies to illustrate the use of different process methods of mission development:

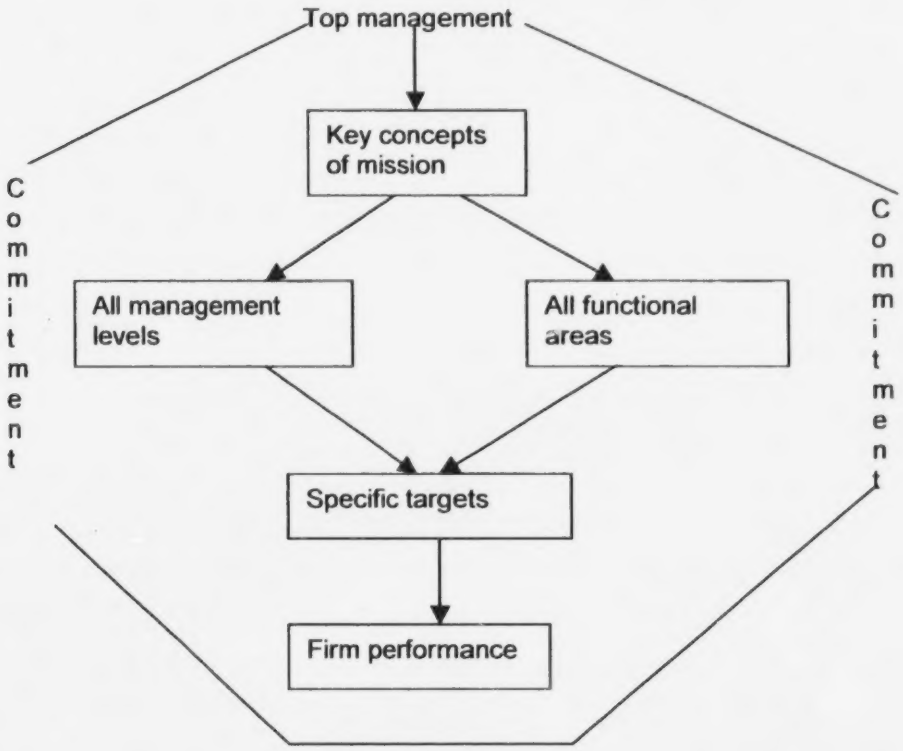
- use of interest groups (staff)
- surveying constituent groups (staff, representatives of LEAs, students, governors, employers etc)
- workshops.

2.33 With regard to the first case study, Peeke notes that 'the lack of involvement of the institute's staff in developing the statement, and the lack of attention to the market place in the statement itself, suggest that the mission will have little impact upon the process and ethos of the college.' Of the second case study, he notes that a problem with the survey technique in the context of mission establishment is the 'lack of opportunity for debate'. Of the third, he notes that the interactive elements which produced a mission outcome were capable of being fed into the development of departmental objectives and strategies: this approach was thus more successfully linked to the operationalising of the mission.

2.34 Although the mission development process varies from one organisation to another, Mullane (2002) claims that there are some basic success factors. 'Specifically, top management must be committed to the process and the values, and organisation members must be involved to produce a mission that will evoke positive emotional responses.'

2.35 Mullane (2002) suggests a framework for giving missions more operational relevance, as shown in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2 Using a mission statement as a strategic tool



2.36 In this framework, there is top management commitment to the whole process of mission establishment. The process then involves:

- identification of the key concepts of mission. This can be taken from an existing mission or could originate in the organisation's core values

- communication of these to all management and functional levels as a set of measurables. This communication is concerned with supporting clarity and purpose. Mullane (2002) says that 'internal clarity of purpose and direction should not be confused with competitive strategy...The mission statement should be developed with the strategic intent in mind to create internal unity that moves the organisation toward[s] competitive success.' This model can be adapted to take on board the overarching consideration of Strategic Area Review and policy direction, as discussed in *Success for all* (DfES 2002) where communication with a range of providers would be paramount

- generation of 'buy in' through the creation of targets congruent with the mission

- targets are then a mission-related mechanism by which the organisation judges its performance.

Summary

2.37 This literature review has shown that mission statements can be potentially powerful strategic tools. But to be effective internally and externally, they need to be the end result of a careful process of consultation, involving the participation of key stakeholders, to enable them to genuinely convey the sense of mission of the whole organisation. Mission statements must also have operational relevance.

3 Analysis of current mission statements

Methodology

3.1 Sample mission statements of FE colleges, schools, work-based learning (WBL) providers and sample national and international businesses were analysed to determine their characteristics based on the seven features identified by Peeke (1994), as shown in **section 2.27**.

3.2 *FE colleges*

Initially, a sample of 18 colleges was selected for mission statement analysis. They represented a range of providers in terms of size, sector served (ie further education or adult), degree of specialism and geographical location. From this sample, eight colleges were selected for a follow-up telephone survey, in which they were asked about their mission development process and the degree to which this was used as a strategic driver. The survey sample was chosen to cover a range of geographical locations, and to include a degree of specialist activity plus some adult education providers, as follows:

- four were general FE institutions
- two were specialist: one agricultural; and one food, tourism and creative studies
- two were adult education providers: one was an independent corporation and the other was under LEA auspices.

3.3 *Schools*

A sample of 11 schools was randomly chosen; from these, six schools were followed up for a telephone survey. They were drawn from a wide range of geographical locations and included two denominational schools. Two had Specialist School status.

3.4 *Work-based learning (WBL) providers*

Samples of 15 mission statements were obtained. These included both providers with national coverage and those with local/regional coverage; those providing training in a single sector; those providing training across sectors; those whose sole aim was training; those for whom training represented an aspect of their overall business; and those designated as centres of excellence. Five providers were followed up with a telephone survey.

3.5 *Companies*

Six national and multinational company missions, identified through website postings, were used.

3.6 *Local Learning and Skills Councils*

In addition, a telephone survey was carried out with five local LSCs to determine the extent to which they currently use provider missions to inform the planning of provision in the local system. Two were from the London area, one from the South East, one from the East and one from the North West. The results are summarised in the **Tables** below. In Table A, the evaluation of characteristics considered whether the element identified was there in its entirety; not mentioned at all; or was referred to, but lacked clarity, in which case it was partially met.

Table A Content of mission statements

Characteristic	FE sector institutions	Schools	Work-based learning providers	Business corporations
Specify clearly the nature of the enterprise in terms of its products and services	Most fully or partially meet	Variable, with some fully meeting, and some not meeting at all	Most fully or partially meet	Most fully or partially meet
Reflect the concerns of organisational members	Most fully or partially meet	Most fully or partially meet. Some evidence of not meeting	Partially met	Most fully or partially meet
Specify the enterprise's markets and customers	Most fully or partially meet	Tendency to only partially meet	Most partially or fully meet	Most fully meet
Identifies distinctive specialism(s)	Most do not meet, but it is a feature of specialist institutions not to identify their distinction	Do not meet	Met when describing specific sector support	Most fully or partially meet
Specify the beliefs and values prized by organisational members that it wishes to communicate	Most fully or partially meet	Most fully meet	Partially or not met	Most fully or partially meet
Specify the technology in use	Do not meet	Do not meet	Partially met	Partially met
Specify the growth policy of the organisation	Variable, with most partially meeting	Do not meet	Partially or not met	Partially met

Table A continued				
Be general enough to be flexible, but specific enough to enable priorities to be established	Variable, with most partially meeting	Most partially met or not meeting	Variable, with most partially meeting	Most fully or partially meet

3.7 The survey revealed that missions are most often generic across the whole organisation. For example, schools do not have separate missions for their sixth forms; WBL providers which are part of larger organisations rarely have separate missions from the parent organisation. It is, however, a practice within some organisations to develop mission statements for functional departments. In these instances, the functional missions identify the department's:

- contribution to the organisation's mission
- role and scope within the organisation
- overall strategic direction.

There is evidence of some FE colleges with Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status developing mission statements for their CoVE which could be reviewed with the above criteria in mind.

3.8 Many school mission statements are accompanied by a set of aims and values. Many colleges also publish their vision, values and the means by which they wish to implement mission as separate statements. Where these elements *are* identified, then there is a commitment to a consideration of vision, mission and values as serving strategic direction and guiding internal behaviours. This supports the Ashridge mission model and Mullane's (2002) emphases (**sections 2.35–2.36** above).

3.9 Other issues that emerged were as follows.

- Colleges are more likely than schools to specify the nature of the organisation in terms of products, services, markets and customers. *This may be because while schools acknowledged their purpose with respect to learners, colleges tended to refer to wider relationships with employers, the communities they served and the geographical reach that represented their markets.*

- Schools are more likely to specify beliefs and values. *This feature has already been identified as a suitable element of mission and could be adopted more widely with other types of provider.*

- Where colleges are specialist, they address this in their mission *through describing the specific sector they serve.* This was not the case elsewhere, even for colleges with CoVE status or schools with

specialist status. In essence, missions do not currently identify the distinctiveness of their institutions, nor the contribution of the organisation to the economic life of their community. *There is an indication that in the light of* Success for all (DfES 2002), *some institutions with CoVE status are actively thinking of reviewing their mission. This could be a trigger for a similar review of mission by all CoVEs.*

- Some school mission statements were not general or specific, but were presented more as mottoes than missions. *This would indicate the need for clarity in relation to the function and purpose of mission as a driver for actions.*

- WBL providers tended to claim to assist their customers to meet the customer's goals, rather than be specific about their own distinctiveness. *This would appear to demonstrate the need to build clarity about the fact that mission is not simply a response to customer demand, but is an expression of distinctiveness.*

- There is little or no reference to the use of specific technology.

Table B below provides a summary of responses to questions on the mission development process by providers.

Table B Providers' responses to questions on the mission development process

	Colleges	Schools	WBL providers
Confirmation of current mission	▪ Most confirmed mission ▪ One reported that a new mission was not yet published	▪ Most confirmed mission ▪ One school claimed that it preferred a vision statement ▪ One school claimed it had allowed mission to drop into non-use	▪ Mission statements were confirmed, but were not always immediately familiar to stakeholder groups such as staff and students
Date that mission was published	▪ The span was 1994 to 2002, with most published since 2000	▪ The span was 1992 to 2002 Most were published prior to 2000	▪ Mostly at the start of a new operation – generally before 2000
Process of mission production	▪ The distinction was made between a substantive review of mission and its modification in the light of strategic review ▪ Where substantive review was undertaken, this involved considerable consultation with stakeholders, use of advisory groups, surveys, workshops and final approval of the governing body. These processes took six months on average ▪ Where modification to mission was involved, this generally took place through a strategic planning process; it was initiated by senior managers and involved consultation with staff and governors	▪ A variety of processes was used, including questionnaires, surveys, senior management paper for discussion with staff. ▪ Generally, outcomes were then discussed through senior managers and governors or a steering group of staff and governors. The mission statement was then sent to parents through the PTA, to students through the council, and to staff for final consultation. The final document was approved by governors	▪ The process varied from formulation by a single individual (chief executive) to formulation by the whole staff, followed by approval by the board

Table B continued			
Who was involved in mission production?	▪ Stakeholders always mentioned were governors, senior managers and staff ▪ There was less involvement of students and employers and no mention of parents in this sample	▪ Stakeholders always mentioned include governors, senior managers and staff ▪ Students and parents tend to be consulted once the draft is produced	▪ Chief executive and staff ▪ Very little evidence of customer/client involvement
How and when is mission revisited and by whom?	▪ Most report that the mission statement is revisited within a strategic review cycle; some revisit it within the annual operating cycle. Thus this varies between one and five years ▪ The most significant factor for review and change was a change of principal. One college cited a change of status from further education to higher education as a catalyst	▪ Variable. The tendency is to review annually as part of the school report or planning cycle ▪ Generally, no perceived need to change mission. ▪ The most significant factors in prompting review and change were seen to be a new head teacher in post and achievement of Specialist School status	▪ Often, no perceived need for review ▪ Little evidence of systematic or regular review

3.10 Key points from this survey:

- colleges review and amend mission regularly in the context of strategic planning
- colleges have more recent statements of mission than schools
- the most significant impetus for radical review of mission is a change of principal or head teacher
- consultation with stakeholders is mainly limited to internal stakeholder groups.

Good practice case study: Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies

Mission update. The impetus for change was a combination of review of the corporate plan and transfer to the HE sector.

The process. Two groups were constituted. A Central Advisory Group (CAG), consisting of all middle and senior managers, and a Senior Managers' Group. An initial paper was submitted to the CAG for discussion, inviting feedback. The collection of ideas and refinement of them through the senior management team followed. Further refinement took place through the CAG in small group discussions. A draft was then sent to the governors for review and consultation. The final draft was then sent to the governors for approval and adoption. The process took four months.

The final mission statement was then published to the CAG and all staff, and linked to new provider targets and performance indicators linked, in turn, to the widening participation agenda.

The previous substantive mission statement involved wider consultation with staff and students and took considerably longer to refine.

3.11 **Table C** summarises the results of the survey of how mission is used by the different types of provider.

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Table C Use and communication of mission

	FE sector	Schools	WBL providers
How is mission used?	▪ All made reference to mission when developing strategic plans. These then fed into operational and development plans ▪ Most linked their self-assessment report to mission, and some reported mission elements that fed QA systems through clarifying the importance of retention and achievement in conjunction with an agenda of widening participation ▪ One claimed a massive turn-around in recruitment, retention, achievement and staff satisfaction since changing its mission	▪ Use of mission was variable. While some schools reported its use as underpinning planning and QA, most used mission as an occasional reminder to staff and students about the institution's underlying purpose and beliefs. In some cases, this was done through picking elements of the mission statement and re-enforcing them at staff meetings or school assemblies ▪ In one school, mission was a driver for staff recruitment and for school improvement; the report to the governors was structured around mission elements	▪ At inception or significant re-shaping of training activity, the mission statement is seen as a way of communicating the purpose of the new business to the outside world. There is little evidence that the statement is significantly used in strategic planning or QA of review activities – even when these take place on a regular basis (eg annual strategy planning days). Mission statements are seen as important at the start, but less important when the company is established
How is it communicated to staff and customers	▪ Through induction of new staff, staff handbooks and staff surveys ▪ Through the prospectus, charter, annual report and student surveys ▪ Inclusion in and use of an employers' survey was less common	▪ In one case, through interview for new appointments to identify applicants' commitment. ▪ Most respondents quoted induction of new staff, the staff handbook, and at full staff meetings at the beginning of the year ▪ Prospectus	▪ Sometimes on the company website, but generally websites are structured to give a direct introduction to specific types of training rather than to an overview of the company's mission

Table C continued			
Any implications for CoVE/Specialist School status?	▪ Most had CoVE status. Some claimed it was too early to say what the impact of CoVE was. Some had CoVe missions ▪ Two institutions reported that the CoVE activity was a very small part of their overall activity and was unlikely to feature prominently in any review of mission ▪ Two institutions were considering the inclusion of a reference to excellence in future mission updates	▪ Few respondents had Specialist School status. These anticipated reviewing their mission in the light of this status	▪ Missions geared to industry and tailored training may differ significantly from those aimed directly at individual learners

3.12 Key points from the survey:

- the systematic use of mission to inform strategy and QA and review systems was more prevalent in FE institutions than in schools
- there is some evidence that mission is used as a driver of operations, but this is still limited
- as yet, CoVE or Specialist School status has not led to a review of mission, but providers are considering this.

3.13 **Table D** summarises the results of the survey on use of mission statements by local LSCs.

Table D Survey of use of mission statements by local LSCs

To what extent are you aware of and seeking provider mission statements?	▪ The general view is that these are not sought currently. The current emphasis is on outcomes ▪ However, greater attention is given to FE colleges when formulating or updating their strategic plans, as these should clearly specify their mission ▪ There is less emphasis on the missions of WBL providers
To what extent are provider mission statements used when reviewing provision, SARs, development plans etc?	▪ Seen by some as low priority ▪ The focus is related to outcomes under the aegis of operations teams ▪ However, FE strategic plans, particularly if there is a change in strategic direction, are reviewed in terms of the appropriateness of mission ▪ Two local LSCs noted that mission statements are included in provider reviews
How useful do you find mission statements?	▪ Most state that not much attention is paid to them, because currently they have low priority; and that the perceived usefulness is variable: 'Nice phrases but do they drive planning or delivery?'
How do you use mission statement?	▪ No common view on them and less interest in the mission statements of WBL providers ▪ One local LSC focuses on looking at mission when considering applications for CoVE status ▪ However, one local LSC is going through an area review process and is looking at the alignment of provider mission statements against area needs ▪ One local LSC stated that it would be actively seeking mission statements from all providers from November 2002 ▪ One local LSC sees the need to review mission in terms of the consolidation of 14–19 provision following SARs

3.14 Key points from the local LSC survey:

- little attention is currently paid to mission statements. This could be because local LSCs are relatively new organisations and have only recently produced their first local plans
- of the five local LSCs surveyed, one identified the use of mission in assessing applications for CoVe status
- where there is interest, it is focused on the strategic plans of FE institutions; there is less expectation on the part of local LSCs that WBL providers should declare their mission
- the usefulness of mission statements is perceived as variable, mainly because they tend to be either too general or lack elements which would drive planning or delivery.

Summary

3.15 The review of mission development and use suggests the following criteria for a mission development and review process:

- mission development must involve all key stakeholders
- mission must drive the operations of the organisation
- mission must be reviewed regularly to ensure that it reflects the environment in which the organisation operates
- mission should emphasise the distinctiveness of an organisation's operation
- provider mission, learner needs and employer needs should be linked – what contributions do providers make to the economy?
- local LSCs need a coherent approach and should make greater use of individual provider missions to help plan and develop local strategic options, choices and patterns of provision. *Success for all* (DfES 2002) and SARs will help in developing provider missions.

3.16 These recommendations pose some significant challenges for the sector. Greater stakeholder involvement is required and strategy processes must go beyond those of planning.

3.17 The value and significance of missions are recognised within the sector. However, their utilisation is, at best, uneven and sometimes only lip service is paid to their existence. This reflects the importance of continuing to raise the profile of strategic thinking.

4 Phase 2 – A framework for mission development and review

Introduction

4.1 The previous section showed that if a mission is to be seen as a useful tool, it:

- must clearly identify provider purpose and distinctiveness
- requires management commitment and 'buy in' by relevant stakeholders; for example, staff, governors, managers and clients
- should have features which enable it to make an impact on strategy, drive provider operations and enable judgements about effectiveness.

4.2 This would indicate that the key elements of a framework should be:

1. location of mission within an area strategic context (*Success for all* (DfES 2002) and the SAR process)
2. clear identification of the organisation's purpose or 'reason for being', including its key values
3. involvement of stakeholders and customers
4. description of mission in a statement containing key values, objectives and related targets that are measurable over time
5. description of mission that emphasises the distinctiveness of provider operations now and in the future
6. use of the mission elements to form the basis of strategic and operational processes
7. annual review of mission, objectives and related targets to ensure continued relevance to the environment.

Mission development within the context of Strategic Area Reviews

4.3 It is possible to adopt Mullane's model (see **sections 2.35–2.36**) to emphasise the place of mission development within a local system. In this context, the commitment would be part of the local LSC strategic planning arrangements and strategies, which then become part of the contextual landscape in which providers locate their mission. This would enable each provider to take the area needs into account and develop a mission that sits within the strategic area framework as it is being developed.

4.4 The model suggests that individual provider missions should be informed by local strategic planning decisions and their future development as a result of the introduction of SARs. The process of provider mission development will take place in parallel with the development of LSC SARs, which will be delivered over a period from March 2003 to 2005/06.

4.5 Providers need a clear understanding of national and local policy directions; for example, on distance learning and e-learning. In turn, the area strategy will also be informed by the missions of individual providers. Consequently, this is seen as an iterative process whereby missions emerge through a collaborative process involving local LSCs and individual providers. This process can present challenges and benefits for providers operating as independent organisations within a planned system.

Guidance on linking institutional mission to area strategies

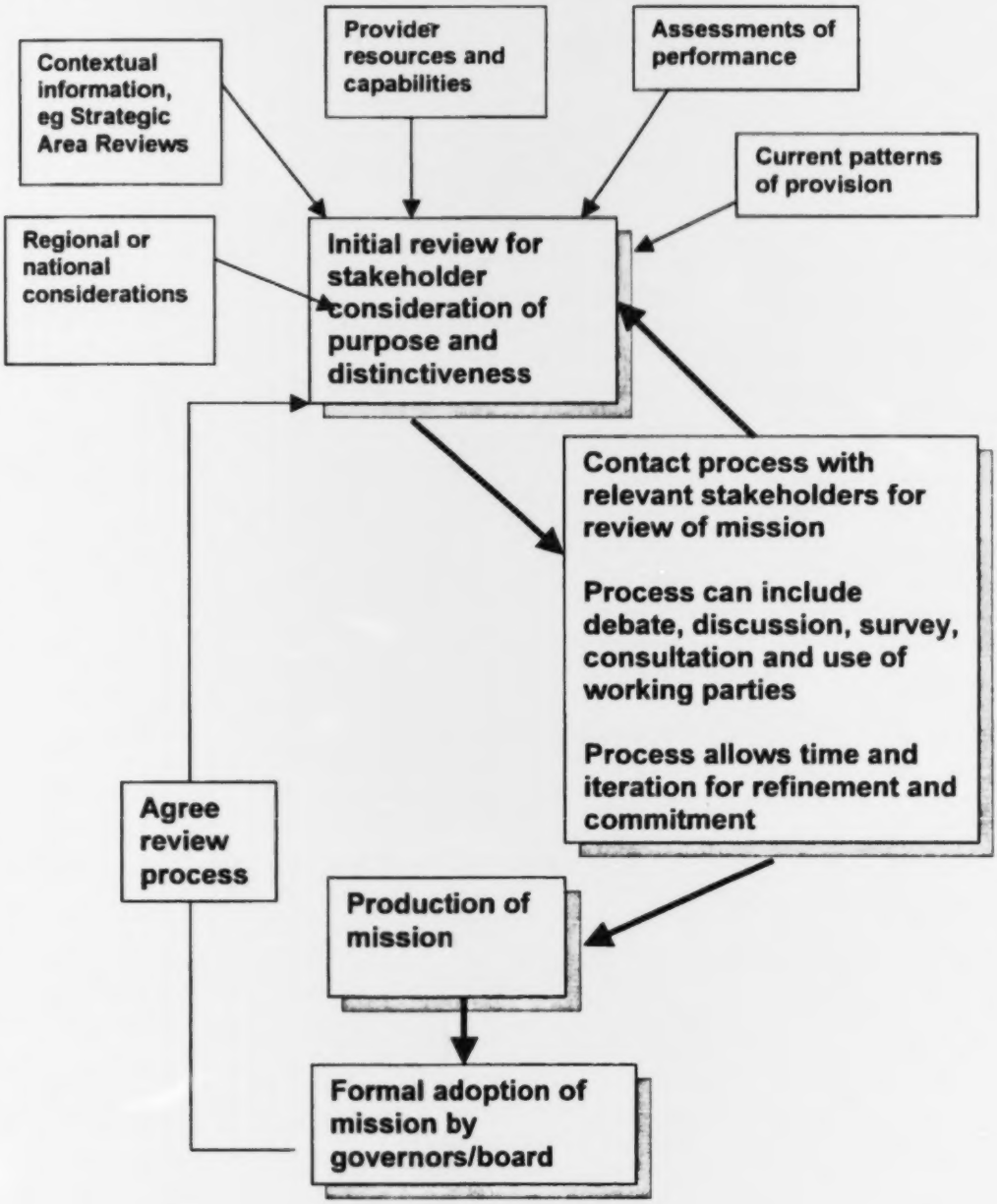
- Local LSCs are to issue indicative guidance to providers on the key elements of SARs.
- Providers should monitor national and local policy developments to inform their positioning within the network of providers.
- Local LSCs are to engage in a consultative process with providers to ensure that providers' strategic aims inform and enrich area strategy development.
- Governing bodies, boards and management committees should have a key role in developing and reviewing institutional mission.
- Governance groups should be aware that the mission should establish the distinctiveness of their organisation and demonstrate its place within the local system of provision. Where this is not understood, assistance should be provided.

Figure 3 shows a future model for providers' contributions to area strategy.

Figure 3 Future model of contribution to area strategy

4.6 **Figure 4** outlines a model of the process of individual provider mission development. This process will differ in detail between specialist and more general providers. Many training providers may not have an 'explicit' mission. The process should not be reduced to the production of a mission statement alone: the real value of the process is in focusing clearly on the organisation's 'reason to be'.

Figure 4 Model of individual provider mission development


Contextual information, eg Strategic Area Reviews
Provider resources and capabilities
Assessments of performance
Current patterns of provision
Regional or national considerations
Initial review for stakeholder consideration of purpose and distinctiveness
Contact process with relevant stakeholders for review of mission
Process can include debate, discussion, survey, consultation and use of working parties
Process allows time and iteration for refinement and commitment
Agree review process
Production of mission
Formal adoption of mission by governors/board

Step-by-step guide for developing individual provider missions

4.7 **Figure 5** (adapted from Stone 1996) gives a sample step-by-step guide to assist organisations in the mission development process, followed by explanatory notes on the the five phases that are set out. *Not all steps will be appropriate to all organisations, and providers' boards would need to decide how best to carry out the reviews and development of missions to take account of their unique circumstances.*

Figure 5 Example of step-by-step guide to developing mission

PHASE 1: ENVISAGE THE FUTURE

- Management articulate their aspirations for the institution (with input from governors, staff and key stakeholders); develop a visual and verbal representation of what the future could be.
- Management defines the practices and values that should guide behaviour.
- Management validates the vision and values with those in governance roles.

PHASE 2: FORM A MISSION TEAM

- Management verbally announces to the organisation the purpose of the mission creation process and the level of involvement expected.
- Establish a taskforce composed of representatives from within the organisation.
- Consult with stakeholders, balance views of various groups, prioritise mission focus.

PHASE 3: DEVELOP A DRAFT MISSION

- Conduct a situation analysis to assess internal and external environment (eg core competencies, area strategic plan, success factors, opportunities, obstacles, beliefs about future trends and events).
- Decide on what form and structure the mission will take (a core mission statement or vision and value statements, philosophies, principles, ethics, etc).
- Draft a mission that includes the essential features listed in **Figure 6**
- Post draft statements/beliefs and solicit input and feedback from staff and customers.
- Synthesise rough statements/beliefs into an overall corporate mission and submit to organisation leaders and board for approval.
- Prepare a budget for mission dissemination and implementation.

PHASE 4: COMMUNICATE FINAL MISSION

- Determine how the mission will be communicated.
- Distribute mission to each employee, announcing upcoming meetings.
- Introduce mission to entire institution in a series of meetings
  - train managers as facilitators
  - schedule managers to introduce mission at departmental level
  - solicit employees for their ideas on how to turn the mission into reality every day on the job.

PHASE 5: OPERATIONALISE THE MISSION

- Align the institutional strategies, tactics, operations, and administrative support systems to be consistent with the mission.
- Translate key elements of the mission into relevant performance objectives for employees at all levels.
- Make mission review an integral part of the strategic planning process.

Figure 6 illustrates the essential features of a mission.

Figure 6 Essential features of a mission

- clearly articulated
- relevant
- current
- written in positive (inspiring tone)
- emphasises distinctiveness
- enduring
- adapted to the target audience
- contains measurable elements.

Explanatory notes to the step-by-step guide

- ***Envisage the future***. To choose a direction, leaders and managers must first have developed a mental image or vision of a possible and desirable future state of the institution, as well as contextual elements such as local LSC plans and strategies, regional or national considerations, resources and capabilities. This will provide a future strategic direction, the foundation for its mission and related goals, objectives and targets, and help to energise it to strive for success and a new level of performance.

- ***Form a mission team.*** Although the organisation leaders are ultimately responsible for developing an organisation's mission, it will be unrealistic for them to do all the work. In this regard, forming a mission team is often appropriate. This should include key representatives from within the organisation who bring specific expertise and skills to the team. It might also include external representatives from key stakeholder groups: governors, learners, customers and local LSC. This team should lead the consultation, plan the review, research the context and local circumstances and pattern of provision, and balance the views of different groups to help to determine a focus for the mission

Guidance on consultation and focus

- Providers are to identify their main stakeholder groups.
- Providers are to provide opportunities for stakeholder groups to express their views on the mission; for example, through focus groups or surveys.
- In concentrating on what they do best, providers are to focus on raising standards, building on their strengths and meeting local and regional skill needs and learner and employer demands.
- Consider *Success for all* (DfES 2002) objectives, SAR guidance, local LSC plans and strategies.

- ***Develop a draft mission.*** Prior to deciding what form the mission should take, the mission team should conduct a situation analysis. A good situation analysis will identify where the institution currently stands, how it came to be where it is, what external forces will influence its future, and what it hopes to become. Once the analysis is complete, the mission team should proceed to draft a mission that includes the essential features listed in **Figure 6**. This draft should then be shared with all members of the institution for review and comment. This is a critical step as it involves employees in shaping the identity and direction of the organisation and ensures that they have an investment in its fulfilment.

  The mission team considers responses in the light of the essential features of a mission and develops a further draft for comment by staff and governors. Following this process, they should present a final draft for approval and prepare a mission plan and budget to facilitate communication and dissemination of the final mission statement throughout the institution and beyond.

Guidance on mission specificity

Institutional missions should avoid the tendency to be all things to all people. The following sample of mission statements express various degrees of specificity about learning and skills needs. Many missions fall into the first category of generality and are less useful as a result. A number are also too vague and this does not help the organisation to achieve its objectives and targets or change its focus.

- To provide high-quality learning opportunities to meet all the learning needs of the local community.
- To contribute to the economic well-being of the local community through the provision of socially inclusive learning opportunities.
- To support local and regional economic development.
- To equip people for the workforce.
- To produce job-ready graduates for the local labour market.

Missions should demonstrate the distinctiveness of the organisation by encapsulating its 'reason to be' and what differentiates it from other providers.

- ***Communicate the mission.*** It is critical to the effectiveness of a mission that all employees throughout the institution should sign up to it. Every opportunity should be used to communicate, confirm, and clarify the corporate mission. This requires more than just publishing and distributing the mission or exhorting employees in various meetings. It requires a significant expenditure of personal time and effort by management to ensure that the mission is shared by all.

- ***Implement the mission.*** Once the mission has been carefully developed and fits the history, culture, and values of the institution, the next challenge centres on how to generate the support and commitment necessary to use it as a blueprint for success. If the mission is correctly formulated, it will be aligned with the institution's strategies, tactics, operations, and administrative support systems. In addition to the crucial communication phase, managers at all levels need to translate the key elements of the mission into objectives and goals that guide the execution of the mission and are meaningful to all employees.

Guidance on making the mission operational

- The mission should be broken down into key elements.
- The elements can be further translated into objectives for individuals and groups that guide the everyday actions of staff.
- Where these objectives are measurable, it is more likely that progress towards making the mission a part of everyday organisational life can be assessed.
- The mission needs to be reflected in the actions of management.
- All key decisions should be taken in the context of the mission.
- Organisation members should ask 'what will be the consequences for our mission if we take this action?'

- ***Review the mission.*** Mission review should be an integral part of the strategic planning process. There needs to be consideration of how frequently this needs to be done, or the circumstances of change that would initiate a review. This might be linked to any evaluation of whether key goals, objectives and targets of the organisation have been achieved or require changes.

Guidance on reviewing the mission

The following questions can inform decisions about the need to review the mission.

- To what extent has the core activity of the organisation changed since the adoption of the mission?
- To what extent have external factors, eg changing local, regional or national strategic imperatives, identified a need for review?
- Is there activity that could be discontinued or are there new opportunities to be developed that could change the character and distinctive purpose of the organisation?

Timescale for reviews

4.8 The DfES has specified that the provider review process will commence in spring 2003. This will include local LSCs initiating a dialogue with providers about their contribution to meeting the overall learning and skills needs of learners, employers and communities. By spring 2004, local LSCs should be able to discuss in detail the potential role, mission and provision of each provider. The aim is to have a clearer understanding of each provider's role by the end of 2004.

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